

(1) News of our JBS website: monitor the progress at www.jussibjorlingsociety.org.

During the next few weeks you'll be able to watch our new website under construction, updating some of the old articles and adding new design features, articles, photographs, and – finally – **sound clips**. Webmaster Michael Mayer is helping us revamp the previous site, and we urge you to browse the current status of the “.org” site and offer your ideas about what else to include (for now, you can send those to this editor at dshea@chorus.net).

We've already noted that by clicking on <Events> you can find articles on the 2004 International Congress in Sweden: one by Sue Flaster that surveys the entire Congress, another by John Steane on “Björling in London” with sound clips chosen to illustrate the lecture; as well as a summary by Kendall Svengalis of Jürgen Kesting's lecture. That lecture deserves a few sound clips of its own, since Messrs. Steane and Kesting coordinated their use of audio-examples in our program (their lectures came consecutively on our session for September 10), and we plan to include more of the music as we update the website.

Another interesting addition to this website is Harald Henrysson's chronology of Jussi's performances, presented in an illuminating way for us by Enrique Gilardoni. He organizes his version of the database in order of first performance by Jussi of each role. Browsing through this database, one gets a distinct impression of how hard-working this tenor was, at first during his 20s and 30s as he learned all but two of his 55 operatic roles – not to mention several hundred songs – and then in the last decade of his life when he continued to perform and extend his basic operatic and concert repertoire in many public appearances and recordings.

We look forward to making this website a useful and attractive resource for all those interested in the life and career of Jussi Björling. This certainly was our experience with the previous website, organized more than six years ago by Mickey Dove, which to date has had over 65,000 hits and has been responsible for bringing many new members to our Society.

(2) News of recent and new recordings of interest.

All members of JBS-USA and JBAS-UK during the current year should have received the new Bluebell ABCD103 set with rare and previously unreleased operatic performances by JB from the archives of Swedish Radio, 1934-51. Our chapters of JBS helped underwrite this release by committing to purchase almost 600 copies of the 2-CD set, which at least in the US is not available except by mail order purchase from Europe.

Although some of the contents of this set is of greatest interest for the serious Björling collector, since for instance the complete Act I of *Aida* suffers a bit from its somewhat tubby sound (even if surprisingly good for 1940), rather ordinary soprano, and strange-sounding Swedish vowels, still there's no doubt that there is much glorious singing to admire whenever Jussi is onstage. This is especially true for the complete Act II of *Roméo et Juliette* from 1943, which catches both our tenor and soprano Schymberg in magisterial form! And if Jussi's first recorded version of “Nessun dorma” is not quite up to the more famous later versions, it's still of inherent interest and absolutely, thrillingly splendid in itself. All together, there are scenes from some 20 operas, from Atterberg to Verdi, and valuable documents all.

Here is some feedback provided by our members:

Vern Kenney (MN): “I was delighted with the quality of the transfers, especially the two ‘Sweden Calling’ excerpts: Just wonderful. I think my favorite, though, was the complete Act II of the Royal Opera's *Roméo*. What gorgeous, impassioned singing! I couldn't help but wonder at the stinging applause from the Swedish audience – in today's opera houses such a performance would be greeted by a huge ovation.”